Ain't I a Woman?

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SMASH PHALLIC IMPERIALISM!

Some thoughts after a G.W.L. meeting.

Sex is an institution. In an oppressive society like amerika, it reflects the same ideology as other major insitiutions. It is goal-oriented, profit & productivity oriented. It is a prescribed system, with a series of correct & building activities aimed toward the production of a single goal: climax.

It's also a drag. For women, in a culture based on our oppression, heterosexual sex is a product we have had to turn out. To encourage us, we are given two minutes of this, a few moments of that, a couple minutes at something else...all aimed towards the Great Penetration and the Big Come. There is great pressure to have an orgasm. Sex without orgasm is a failure, it's a drag, it's incomplete, and very very sad. (Just like marriage is not real until it is "consummated".) Because of phallic imperialism built upon Freud's ignorance of the female body, orgasm is supposed to come from intercourse. That's just terrific for boys, but since our orgasm-producing organ is the clitoris, external to the vagina - contradicting capitalist sexist physiology - many women don't produce the appropriate orgasm thru heterosexuality. By that criteria, they are frigid.

I'm a lesbian. A lot of people can't figure out "what we do", how we make love without a penis around for the final consummation. A lot of boys have these ideas of dildos and bananas. Sex as an institution is so totally tied up with the penis and it's goal that boys assume there must be some poor substitute for their noble item.

I always hated sex with men. The pressure of the goal, the rigidity of the process and ends was always totally unsatisfactory. Whenever I hear the word 'sex,' all those shitty experiences I had with men come to mind. I cannot separate the word 'sex' from the phallic tryanny I suffered from for so many years.

For me, coming out meant an end to sex. It's dead and gone in my life. I reject that institution totally. Sex means oppression, it means exploitation. It serves the needs of boys. It has little to do with pleasure for the greatest mass of oppressed people: women. Physical contact and feelings have taken a new liberatory form. And we call that sensuality. The women's movement in general, especially at the beginning, and gay feminism now is a fantastically sensual experience for me. I love my body and the bodies of my sisters. Physicality is now a creative non-institutionalized experience. It is touching and rubbing and cuddling and fondness. It is holding and rocking and kissing and licking. It's only goal is closeness and pleasure. It does not exist for the Big Orgasm. It exists for feeling nice. Our sensuality may or may not include genital experience, that may or may not be the beginning or the ending of the experience. It may be anywhere, or nowhere.

To make good love with women, I don't want to have to 'produce' anything. Except pleasure. And that can be at any level or in any form. The sensuality I feel has transformed my politics, has solved the contradiction between my mind and my body because the energies for our feminist revolution are the same as the energies of our love for women. When we feel good about someone we may sleep together. That could mean a lot of things from hugs to climax to cuddling to being very close but not touching. If we feel good in a group we may have a pajama party, which would be called an 'orgy' inside the institution of straight sex. That could be a genital thing or not. We are free to act without pressure. I refuse to feel like I must make a decision about whether to "put out" or not. There is no such thing as putting out among us. There is not set physical goal to our sexuality There is no sex.

The whole language is oppressive. It is white male-oriented and heterosexual. One word that must go is "sex" because that describes a way of being physical that can only draw up very bad memories for a lot of us. We must use it only in referring to that oppressive institution, not to any new forms we are developing. Having sex means accepting a set of criteria for "success" that we did not set up and develop among ourselves.

Sensuality is formless and amorphous. It can grow and expand as we feel it. It is shared by everyone involved. It isn't something one puts out for another. Sex with boys was like doing alienated labor so that one with power could make good profit off of my surplus labor. Sexuality with women is a collective experience growing out of our struggle. Smashing the notion of sex, getting away from these concepts so intimately tied up with the penis, helps us destroy roles. One thing we realized in our group of gay feminists is that the word "lover" doesn't describe anything for us anymore very much. It is very hard to tell who is who's lover, because that is a condition determined by genital contact in our society. But among us, we have a very brazen set-up. I don't sleep with the same women every nite. I might cuddle with one sister tonite because we were together and felt close and I might crash on some matress with a bunch of women tomorrow because we all danced together half the nite. If your lover is someone you feel emotional and physical attractions to and where there is some kind of mutual commitment, then we are surely the biggest group of floozies in town. It's so wonderful. Without that kind of exclusive coupling sex and lovers breed, people cannot fall into traditional roles so easily. Because each time you sleep with someone you have to make the decision that time. Dependent exclusionary relationships take away free will. It becomes an institutionalized habit to sleep together regularly and there is not usually a fresh decision each time. Amongst us, our getting together is depencent on the reality of the present, not on the promises of before. Sensuality is something that can be very collective. Sex is private and tense. Sensuality is something you want your best friends to feel and act on with your other best friends. Sex is something you want power and territorial rights over. Sex is localized in the pants and limited by that. Sensuality is all over and grows always. Sex is pinpointed in the pants because the penis is there and the penis is, if not the material source, the material basis for power in amerika. If you don't have one you are fucked over by those who do. If you don't have capital you get fucked over by those who do. Unless you attach yourself to someone who has it so that you can serve them in exchange for protection (known as marriage.) Sperm is coin. And that whole system of exchange necessarily excludes us as lesbians. We can't pretend that those few flaps of skin that make up the masculine apparatus are just a few objective ectodermal gatherings. That stuff is the proof of a right to have access to privilege. Some boys reject that privilege, but they always have the possibility of whipping it out in an emergency and asserting their privilege.

We are building a revolution which isn't based on such drivil. And we must have a new language and aesthetic to describe it. Lesbianism is not a sexual perversion: it has nothing to do with sex. It is not another way to "do it": it is a whole other way to have contact. Sex is a phallic term and we are involved in building a humane world. It's like when people talk about being bisexual it blows my mind. It's like saying that if you have an apple and an orange you have two apples because they're both fruits.

Heterosexuality and lesbianism are two forms of physical contact. But that's as far as the similarity goes. I sleep with women, make love with women. am a woman, a lesbian. But I don't have sex with anyone. If I had sex, I could have it with a boy, but that would be a whole other trip from what I am feeling about my gay sensuality. It would be another experience altogether, not a different form of gay sexuality. I would be reentering an institution the structure of which is inherently oppressive to me. Although particular experiences might be of reasonable fun. But radical lesbian sensuality is a form which I myself am helping create. It is not an institution existing outside of me, like sex is. It is me, us, as it comes out of our new consciousness.

KATZ

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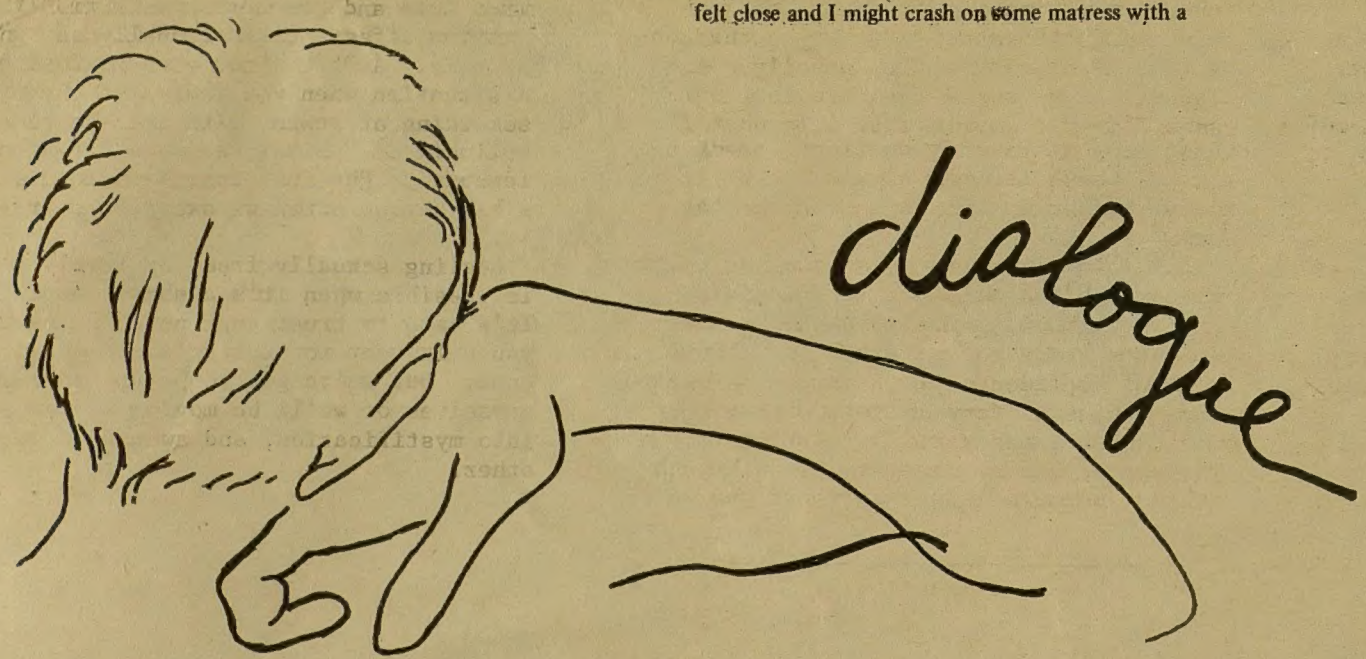


I tend to think of monogamy from the outside - like monogamy means them, not me and whoever. Since I've never been in a monogamous relationship with a woman, I only know how it feels to be around it not making it.

What I think of is how I feel around two people who are into an intense relationship. I have to qualify the idea of exclusiveness = even if people are not exclusively involved, say they're open to relating sexually to more people, that isn't the difference. I think that tight relationships necessarily exclude me or others at some level. How we relate is limited/affected by their relationship. I guess everyone has been alone at some time and probably you don't forget how that feels, even when you feel more secure. But you act from where you're at.

A couple self-criticisms/questions:

1-I'm equating monogamy with security- maybe that's not so true

2-My anger that there isn't enough security to go around becomes resentment

3-I see contradictions between "couples" and "community."

When I think of the community we are building, how it will be, I see a variety in relationships-one to one, one to three, small groups, a large group, very fluid patterns. A community of mostly couples seems real intimidating to a loner. There's a pressure it seems...find a partner (but I don't know if I want or can handle a relationship like this) or create your own patterns. But who's gonna support the new idea--couples? Maybe people who have been monogamous and not satisfied.

I am usually disturbed by the limited thinking of people who do not question the Great Big Monogamous Assumption. People who see any relationship in terms of monogamy or not-yet-monogamy or transition-between-monogamous relationships. A situation I was in sort of relates to this-a relationship that I have not analyzed, have avoided analyzing in any but a very simplistic way. Now it holds a meaning that I didn't give validity to before. (Now it's also very much over with.) I may have criticized it for things I didn't understand.

K. and I had a relationship for several months. We didn't struggle much together, we had vast basic differences in values, lifestyle, politics, other things. Our relationship was limited to the few levels we didn't want to argue about; mostly it was physically relating and goofing off. We were not emotionally dependent on each other, we didn't live or work together, and we were not either of us exclusive cause we were not meeting much of each other's personal needs. We both related emotionally and sexually to others. When we got together it was a situation of 1) pure accident, 2) your bed or mine or 3) a women's community party. The third scene was strange. Sometimes we weren't there at the same time; people grin and ask me where is she (cause hardly anyone else knows her) cause they connect us. I say I don't know; someone says like that's too bad; I think: but you're the one who wants to know where is she. Possibly if it didn't seem that I was supposed to be with her I wouldn't miss her. If she's not around people ask me questions about her that I can't answer cause I don't know her so well. People seem to think that strange or sad. Crap, if I knew her mind any better, (if she let me, which she wouldn't) I'd probably have to get out of the whole thing. cont. on P.3

K. and I sort of agreed on not having commitment to each other, not being exclusive or monogamous, not being possessive. That involved some struggle for me. I began it feeling I had a right to make demands on her because we had a sexual relationship but she didn't agree and didn't want to make those demands on me. I don't think either of us derived much sense of identity through each other.

What the hassle was, was that other women who knew me, and her (a little), assumed that our relationship because it was sexual, was or should have been deep, intense, more involving on levels that it wasn't. We were not a "couple" like they were "couples." During this same time I was involved with another woman whom I loved and was struggling with on levels that were important to us. But that relationship was not legitimized by the community like mine and K.'s was, though, cause we didn't go to parties together or have sexual relations.

Both of these women are (I think)(they think) bisexual. I don't know what that means, in this context.

I feel like there is a mystique around lesbian sexual relations that must be questioned. Having sex is not heavy for me. Celibacy is heavy - the idea of celibacy, and the reality of not having sex with someone but wanting to but it's too heavy for her.

The whole tie-up of the sex mystique, monogamy, the assumption of personal commitment, seems too straight to belong in our community.

Afterthought: The general uptightness and unavailability of easy sexual scenes makes people protective of the one dependable sexual relationship they may have.

Sex is heavy for me and celibacy is at least less heavy and that is probably the reason I wanted to have a dialog with you on this subject. It isn't that I disagree with the community you envision -- it's more like I could not easily fit in-- it would be a hard struggle for me.

It is not coincidental that all of us envision/fantasize about personal or community relationships that would best suit us. The community you write about is one you could adapt to well -- it seems to be really based on how you, in fact, do relate to people. And because it is difficult for me to handle sexual relations I want to tell you where I'm coming from because you seem to have some assumptions (maybe not incorrect as much as over simplified) about women who don't "support the new idea" by their actions.

From the time I can remember I was afraid and embarrassed about sex. Perhaps if I had really experienced a lot of sexual desire I would have gotten over this fear but I never did -- not until I was convinced by friends, shrinks and the world in general that I was sick. Then I suddenly became hornier than all hell. But not really -- it was very forced. I still don't feel the desire very often and even less do I feel a sexual attraction to anyone. When I do it reaches horrendous proportions of importance. And that makes any level of rejection heavy and really hard to handle. In a way it's like you often want relationships for sex whereas I almost always want sex because of relationships. I don't know as either way is right. I'm sure I don't think either way is wrong but they are different. And because of that difference both of us come to dealing with this problem (monogamy and personal relationships in our community) from different places with different abilities as far as change goes and perhaps different needs we want met. I somehow don't see you or your idea vs couples. I think a lot of us are in many different places on this subject and I do see people question the great monogamous assumption at least in terms of <u>trying</u> not to interpret all relationships in terms of their process in or out of monogamy. But we have a lot to struggle out to create ways of relating that are freer and that will take some amount of patience and kindness with each other's fears and uptightness. We'll also need to learn to take rejection on some levels. Somehow I don't think the answer to the heaviness of being rejected is that no one should be able to reject relating to someone.

I don't know as I think this is such a hot answer to what you wrote. I guess I feel very defensive cause I felt you were callous about anyone not being as sexually free as you -- and assuming that if someone isn't they think monogamy and exclusive relationships and the mystification of sex are the only roads to heaven.

It worries me that I didn't see that callousness to you. It's a real struggle for me to understand feelings that are a lot different than mine. But my feelings of isolation and insensitivity to how someone feels in a situation, to their mood, things like that, - it's a whole other article. And I want to respond to you, and it's not easy cause there's a crucialness about sexual relations that comes into play in just talking about it. The pressures on us most of our lives - do it, don't do it, do it only under these conditions, do it all the time - are so pervasive that I feel even my fantasies are unoriginal, really romanticized. Your honesty breaks through. I was afraid to admit even to myself that I really did want a relationship for sex. That's especially threatening to say in the context of the relationship, usually. And I question my sexual feelings too, because I'm not so sure that it's what I want, that I identify emotional needs as sexual cause it seems simple. Also it seems easier to take rejection on that level.

All this points out to me that we really have needed to raise our consciousness together about sex and it seems we are only now ready to deal with it. I feel sort of confident, just because of recent experiences of very up front discussions with women I was sexually relating to. It seems a really necessary breakthrough for me, being able to talk about how we make love and how our satisfaction/frustration affects us emotionally and physically. And it's not easy to feel out a situation when you feel like there's something at stake, with all the romantic bullshit of "this is supposed to be spontaneous." Physical communication is possible but so often we exaggerate or force it.

Feeling sexually free, or freely sexual, is possible when it's a shared feeling. It's hard to trust your perceptions when you only want to pick up on the positive ones. But we've got to be up front with ourselves or we'll be moving backwards into mystification, and away from each other.

I'm really interested in what both of you have said in your dialog. Right now I'm confused about the concept of monogamy. I guess I'm more comfortable talking about 'primary relationships' because I believe things change between people and almost never is a relationship going to last a lifetime. What I mean by "primary relationship' is when most of my emotional priorities center around one person. Naturally a one to one relationship may be monogamous for a time, but so often that doesn't work out because it's so possible to have strong feelings about more than one person and nice feelings for a whole lot of people. And in theory anyway a firm primary relationship should be able to encompass other relationships for each of the people in it.

But it's an idealistic theory and really difficult to have operate smoothly and happily. When I am putting a lot of energy into a relationship with one person and that person begins to relate heavily with someone else as well as me, it's real hard to keep from feeling emotionally rejected and to keep on believing that our relationship is really all that primary to the other person. Her energies are being divided and since mine aren't it seems like an unequal relationship.

The fallacy in that is caused, I think, because I equate/interpret time spent with emotional dedication. It doesn't logically follow that just because the woman I love spends time with and relates sexually to another woman that she isn't just as committed to our relationship as I am. (Easy to say but hard to feel.) The other fallacy is that I can imagine myself relating to another woman and still keeping my primary feelings intact. Or can I. Again, it's a good theory but hard to practice. The only way I can see it working for me is for the secondary (or tertiary...etc.) relationships to happen when there is a large block of time spent away from No. 1. Also unrealistic.

The obvious self-criticism already to what I have written is that I operate monogamously on an emotional level despite my theory or even practice. I <u>do</u> cling to a "happily ever after" ideal, even with enormous change staring me in the face. I suppose that's normal for a lot of people, but it really does have to be struggled with.

One reason I know I'm conservative about relating to more than one person sexually is that for me there is just not that much to be gained from a brief sexual relationship. I think it usually takes a really long time and a lot of care and effort for me to understand another woman sexually - her likes, her needs - and for her to understand mine. It's just real risky to expose those things about myself without first building up a trust level that depends so much on time spent gradually learning each other's responses.

First Feelings For A Woman Passing Through

I am sitting here in the living room
I sit here often
There is so much I can't seem to do
but I sit well
in living rooms

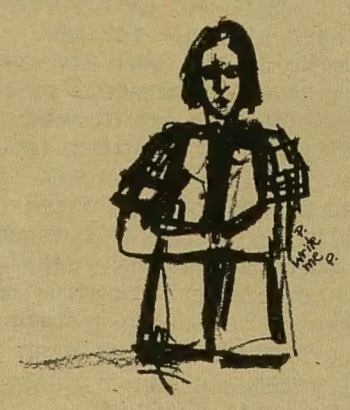
Tonite I am sitting alone in the living room
The others have gone to bed
two by two
Often I sit with them and
I never mind going to bed alone
except tonite

I hoped she'd call today
but I knew she wouldn't
or might not
I knew I shoudn't hope
so I sat in the living room
for most of the day
until I got up to be productive
I always feel I have to be productive
if I leave the living room

Tonite I am thinking about you
I never feel attracted to anyone but her
except tonite
I didn't know the situation though
There were four of you
and I am in the habit of thinking
she'll still call

I could have asked you to stay
There is lots of room in this living room
It isn't often I feel this attraction
to let it go by is so scary
I may sit here for a long time
before it comes again
to reassure me I am still
a sexual being
of sorts

Tonite was not one for knowing
what's happening
I wouldn't mind your "no"
if I could have asked the question
But I'm not so sure
I could have handled your "yes"
if that's what you answered



The Women's Movement is My Community

The women's movement is my community. I find love and strength and support among sisters. I'm even comfortable with the women now; I've forgotten to be self-conscious at times, which isn't usual for me. We have community. There was a time when I must have forgotten the source of my new self-confidence because I got involved in a one-to-one relationship with a woman who wasn't part of the woman's movement. I thought I could maintain all the community I felt with sisters while engaging in a more exclusive relationship. I think now that it's possible, depending on how good the one-to-one is.

Community doesn't mean physical satisfaction to me. It means a sense of trust that comes from my assumption that if you too are working toward a women's culture then we must share the same anger and loyalties. More depthful analysis is needed, because class background, for one thing, certainly gives women different perspectives and priorities, but the basic identification of oppression (male culture on every level) and loyalty to women (by women who are woman-identified) is an equalizing step we have all taken, my assumption goes. Community describes the feeling I had on several trips last year, not knowing anyone in the cities I visited, yet being able to find sisters to help me out everywhere. It's a feeling I'll never get over if you know what I'm talking about.

This very intimate relationship lured me back into the straight world (not as opposed to gay, but as opposed to communal life style). It was a wild and wonderful, idealized love affair with the appropriate promises and plans. All the romantic, euphoric frolics of a first love high aimed me out of the woman's community and toward monogamy. The love affair ended (she is heterosexual after all), as the real ones do, in a broken heart. I was so hurt that I was pretty much out of my head.

I had never suffered a tragedy within the women's collective I was living in at the time, and I didn't know how to tell them, once it had happened, that I wanted their help pulling myself together. My method of handling hurt for 21 years had been to keep it inside, and that was my reaction to this painful ending. Having been raised with the social conscience of guilt about everything, I isolated myself, trying to anaesthetize the pain, hide in guilt and shame, and lick my wound, leaving my body to sort of get along by itself.

My catatonia lasted a good long time. My body, left to its own devices, literally and figuratively fucked up my life pretty well. I (it) neglected and disloyally turned my (its) back to sisters who I do love and care about very much. I wanted someone to talk to me, but I guess my image of distrust and hurt barricaded me from attempted approaches. I was numb, and unable to exert one ounce of energy for anything. Socialized behavior is very unkind I think, with all the defensiveness we learn.

Another relationship began. It was an attraction-based friendship, very down-to-earth. She was understanding and attentive during and after my trauma. Perhaps, out of old habit, I needed just one woman to lean on after my disillusionment. Though we have some very strong differences, I've built up a very special loyalty toward her. We're trying to work out a sort-of monogamous relationship that leaves plenty of room for community with women; in other words a less possessive, less insecurity-laden, less dependency-oriented monogamous relationship.

I haven't really been able to understand why I had to do what I did--leave the movement, get into a more exclusive relationship, and take so long in reviving myself. Some of my thoughts and feelings during that time were replays from my past before I knew of women's liberation. I resented having to compromise my zest for women's culture to support myself in a system I detest and want to destroy. I recognized the beginnings of old vices--money cycle (have want have want), competitive-isolative cycle (have keep stayaway have keep stayaway), etc. Old feelings returned of being alone and not understood and desperately ready to fight for my few and waning rights under the shitty system.

Because of these feelings, their ugly associations, I feel a now tried and lasting bond between myself and feminism. Sure, women can be feminists and be loners, or even twosomes, but sister, there's no support like a loyal collective, or a coven of screaming, hexing witches, or a cross-country population of strong, inflicting feminists.

WATCH-OUT FOR SUBVERSIVE RELATIONSHIPS!!

An argument I had with 2 married couples began with the two women saying that AIAW doesn't "answer their needs."

women: How can you say you relate to us when all you write about is a lesbian culture?
me: I think understanding why you are not gay is fundamental to your woman-identity.
woman: But you live with a man, is he exceptional?
me: No (thinking why am I always asked by these men and women to expose my life to their scrutiny).
man: all you (gay) women ever write about is killing men.
me: I think the last time we mentioned killing was in an article I wrote. (I think, as a straight woman, and because I live with a man, I feel more directly threatened by men, so I write more about hate--I've noticed that gay women write much more about women and love.)
man: Anyway, you don't want to kill men, you want to fuck them (or...all you need is a good fuck).

...At which point I heard sirens going off in my head, mumbled you are offensive, my girlfriend said that she didn't have to take that shit from anyone, and we all split.

I've been thinking about how I've changed this year, and what it means in terms of my self-image and relationships to women and men.

I came here to be with a man who was to teach at the university. We thought it best to pretend we were married because we didn't know how it would affect his job if we were to live together as we did in the city. Right away I had trouble when university people would speak to me only because of my relationship with him. I held out less than a month before I began to tell everyone the truth (at that time I thought there was a real big difference politically to choose not to get married and yet live with a man). Even now these people still call me Mrs. or don't remember my last name (or choose not to). I didn't see how I was manipulated right from the start.

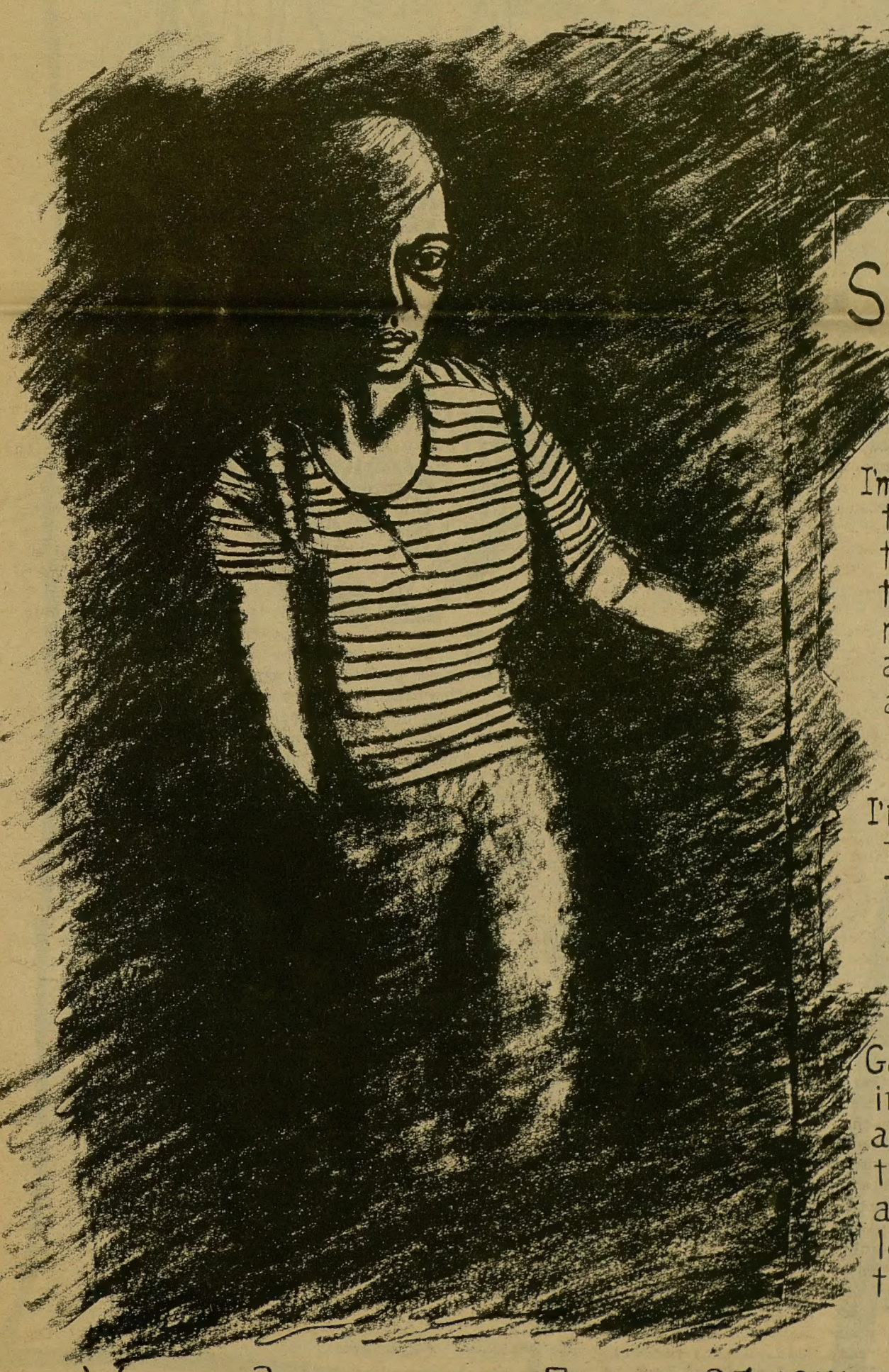
I identified with the faculty wives because I thought under different circumstances I could have been married, with children, in the same situations they are in. In discussions about women they nearly always agreed up until their secure middle-class position was threatened, and they usually defended their men then. I found that they listened and questioned but never really changed their minds about anything. This crusading drained much of my energies, yet I always continued because I saw in their behavior a good deal of myself. I began to think about why all of us were so frustrated in our love relationships with men and why we stayed in these relationships.

I felt if I had nothing else I could be sure of about myself-that men were attracted to me. I figured that I hated myself when I got right down to it, but with a man I always felt I had a secure role-identity to fall back on, within which I felt safe and knew I would be acceptable. The funny thing is, I never linked that role with sex until now, nor did I see how vulnerable that "secure" role left me. It gave the man the absolute power to manipulate the approval which I sought.

With women, I'm into singing praises right now, because the honesty and affection with which we deal with each other is so incredibly beautiful. I keep thinking of Pam's poem about "the dyke in me never being able to go back to the heterosexual world," and though I've never had a gay sexual relationship - I know I understand what she meant.

I feel it's a big transition to see myself as a dyke, and even saying dyke makes me feel a bit frightened because it's such a strong sounding word. I've never seen that part of myself before and I feel unsure of how my advances will be accepted by gay women. A lot of WL literature talks about straight women wanting to use gay women to have a "gay experience" so I feel a sense of guilt even though I know that't not where I'm at.

I've seen the love that gay women have for each other, within the context of our collective and within the female community. One-time when I was freaked out and wouldn't answer the phone or come to meetings, two women from AIAW came out 17 miles to find me, to see if I was OK. I see women together, arms around each other, best of friends, lovers. And I know that a certain level of lying a person maintains to preserve a relationship with a man, could never happen between two women who know each other.



swan song

I'm not writing anymore songs
till i know what i'm talking about
till we understand each other
till then i'm only writing
notes to myself
about your oppression
and my oppression

I'm not coming out to sun myself again
till i've burned and peeled some
till i remember more summers and
winters of white skin
and the red pain of changing

Got to go somewhere
in this crazy place
and try to hear my own noise
then come back quiet
and confront you where we are
looking behind us for the directions
that each of us walked away from.

A Gay Fairytale

- or -

a

Lesbian

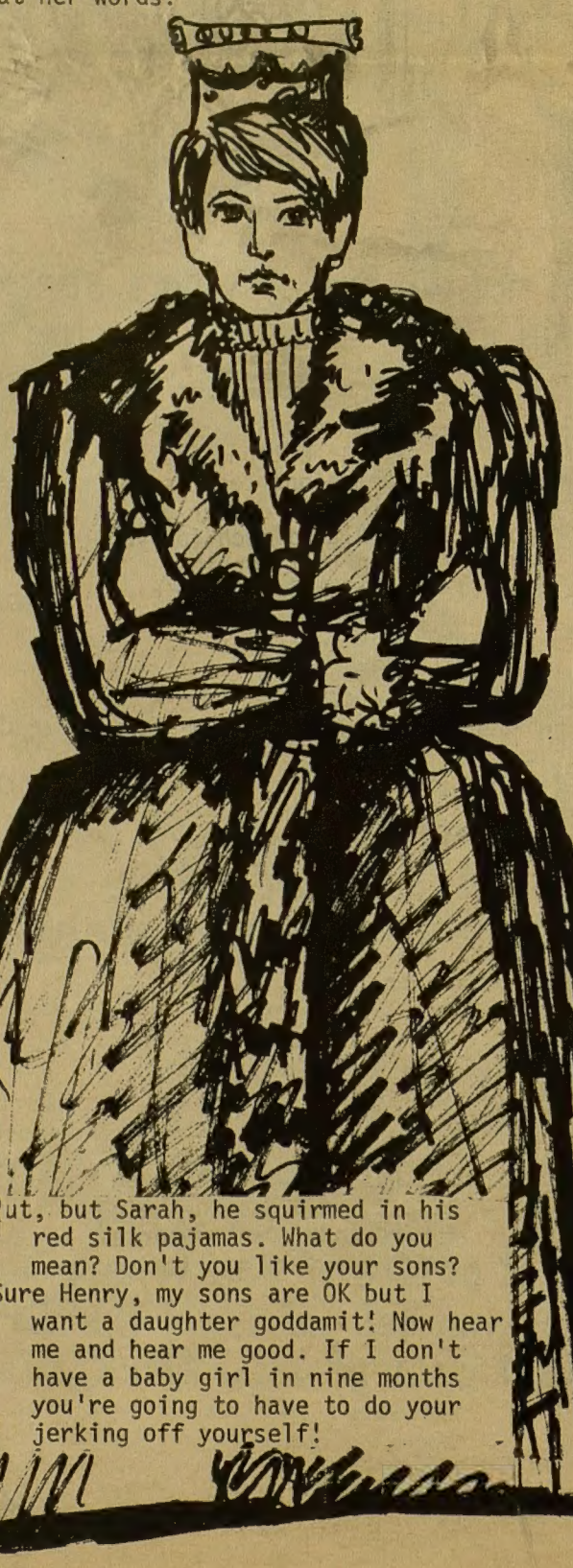
Plot

Once upon a time in a town where sugar plums bumped from the trees to the ground lived a black eyed princess named Snowshoe. She was called Snowshoe because of the tale they tell of her birth. One evening, in the winter of a dark year when the king was returning to his palace on his way back from a hunt, he spyed a bundle wrapped in soft fern at the mouth of a great cave. Not venturing to go in beyond the mouth of the cave and anxious to see if the bundle was a baby or not the king picked it up. The king saw that it was indeed a baby, a baby girl in fact, strung to a snowshoe. Now it so happened that in the palace bedroom just nine months before the queen had said to the king:

Henry (for that was his name), Henry, if you don't give me a baby girl this time I will never fuck you again.

The story of the king and queen's children is a strange one, often talked about in this town. The queen after nine long years of a tedious marriage (not to mention other more inflammatory adjectives) had borne nine sons and not one daughter. Although she had no inkling of it there was a reason for this. You see the king was a wicked man, as wicked as most men go, and had given the queen a potion in their earlier years that had made her have but sons.

Now, when she at last threatened the king he grew pale and frightened at her words:



But, but Sarah, he squirmed in his red silk pajamas. What do you mean? Don't you like your sons?

Sure Henry, my sons are OK but I want a daughter goddamit! Now hear me and hear me good. If I don't have a baby girl in nine months you're going to have to do your jerking off yourself!

Now the king could not think of such a thing. It might ruin his kingly manner for life. Good heavens, what would the servants say when they peek through the keyhole at night? For he knew the servants always peeked when the king and queen went to bed and the king rather liked the thought.

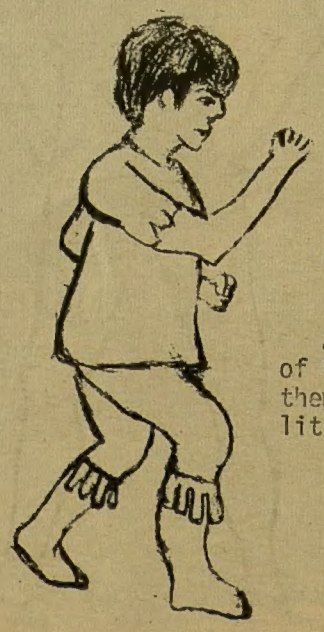
In actuality no one watched the king and queen in their bedroom at night.

Anyway when the king came upon the baby wrapped in soft fern upon a snowshoe he felt quite relieved and hence he brought the babe back to his wife.

We will call her Snowshoe, the queen said.

Thus Snowshoe grew up a princess in a palace with nine brothers, a father with a belly like the plum pudding she ate for dessert, and a mother much out of touch.

But Snowshoe grew up quite different from the way that the king had conceived. Her manner was tough and burly, she associated only with street people and she came home smelling like dirt and dung. Though he yelled and whipped her every night it was to no avail. When she began to beat up his sons he decided to call the final halt.



Snowshoe, you're going to have to stop this immediately, he roared that night at the dinner table.

Already the princess had smashed three of her brothers' noses, knocked two of them unconscious and threatened to castrate little Willie at breakfast.

Yeah. If you were goosed, pinched, squeezed and called jelly cunt you would do the same.

Enough! Enough! I've had enough! the king bellowed. Out! She goes out! I've just about had my fill of this derelict dyke with her foul mouth and antagonistic fist. She's not my child and I want nothing more to do with her. I should have left her by the old cave where I found her.

Henry, Henry, calm yourself please. Snowshoe was only defending herself against your wicked sons. Why, you know yourself they're wicked. You heard Mary Hanswell tell Martha Bushwick how they roam around nites in the old carriage they rigged up and 'sexually assaulted and violated young maidens'. Henry, you heard her say that. You know it's true.

The queen then began sobbing from fear and anger. By this time the king was livid pink with rage. He stammered and sputtered as he spoke.

Why--why----th-those sluts ought to be p-punished and, and wh-whipped! What were they doing uh-uh--

The king never finished his sentence for Snowshoe threw the rest of her plum pudding in his face. With a defiant look on her mug, out she stomped. This time she meant to get her due revenge.

The air was lightly pulping the year's first snow fall but the heat of rage in Snowshoe's body kept her warm and pumping strong. She could only think of the malfeasence of men that roamed far and wide in the town. That evil prevailed and dominated like a nest of snakes that squirmed and struck.

Remembering the king's words about the place of her birth Snowshoe felt an even greater anger. She had been told she was the king and queen's daughter though she often had doubted it very much. And so Snowshoe came to the cave in the forest where thick thistles now bordered the entrance. The mouth of the cave was locked in musty black but beyond the seventh perspiring stalactite, Snowshoe rounded a bend. There the light opened and a full room, warm and solid with the goings on of more than a dozen women strong, beamed its greeting upon Snowshoe. She was hugged and welcomed by all but her special attention was drawn to Rupp. Rupp was a tough-bodied, wild-eyed woman who kissed Snowshoe longer and more langorously than the others.

Snowshoe, Rupp said affectionately when they were at last alone together on a thick fur in one far corner of the room. I've felt so much for you. Having to live in that horrible castle with those men and no sister beside you. We tried to rescue you several times but we needed a hopeful spirit besides.

Snowshoe kissed her full open mouth and snugged her head into Rupp's neck.

If I had known you were here, she said hoarsely in Rupp's ear.

And when they made love in the warmth of each other the candles danced in a flickering parastalsis of light. The cave walls seemed to swell in and out. Snowshoe had never experienced a pleasure such as the one she tumbled through now. Her voice rose and broke in her throat. Her eyes dimmed and splashed like water. And then when they were still the moon had risen high and full. It was red that night. Then the women all formed a circle and began their plot.

And it was thus that on the night of the blood red moon that more than a dozen angry women, their candles high and their voices strong, stormed into town on horseback and struck every man dead in his bed.

THE END

I had a chum from the first grade named Ann. She was always first on the achievement tests, and I was a faraway second, so I guess that's why she chose me. We also had the same last initial and were seated together alphabetically for the first six grades. The proximity gave me a great advantage over all the other boys and girls attracted by her strangeness and beauty. She was serene at six, and my idol. But she was also alone, and I filled what part of the void could be filled.

In 1959 I was sixteen and had a car. One night Ann asked me to take her to a friend's house to meet some people. It was a group of women who met every Friday night at Mary's house, (while her husband was out.) There were several teachers, Mary, some college students, and us, younger by at least 5 years than the youngest. We used to talk about women alot, and sometimes Joey would repeat poetry like the "Hound of Heaven." I liked the evenings, which ended with a large steak cut up into small pieces on a common platter, and served with bread to mop up the juices. I never understood the nature of the group. Ann gave me THE WELL OF LONELINESS to read. I had had warm feelings for a girlfriend for a year, and many things came clear. I wanted to know more about this "type" of woman, so the next Friday night I asked Bobby (who had been in the army, like the heroine of the book had been in the ambulance corps) if she had ever met any "homosexual women." She smiled, while Ann gave me a damn hard nudge in the ribs to shut up. I thought I had brought up a no-no subject, so I shut up and acted on my own impulses, starting a relationship with my friend of a year. I also read and re-read the WELL. It was kept in the "locked case" of our small town public library, and I had awful nightmares each time before I checked it out. (Later I learned that the staff was mostly gay, but at that time I was sure someone would tell my parents, so I would try to hide the book in a big pile, and hope they wouldn't notice.)

Ann had started her own relationship with Mary by this time. I knew they were close, and I projected from my own physical relationship that they might have something going, but we never discussed it. One night we heard a loud crash at the bottom of the hill. Ann and I ran down the street to see what had happened. It was Mary's little car, all crushed, and she was decapitated. Ann went into shock. Somehow I got her away from there and home. When she finally came out from under a few hours later she said, "Go away, I want to be with her, I want to die." So I told her mother that everything would be O.K., knowing that might not be the case. I got Ann to the bedroom, then hid in a corner where she couldn't see me, but where I could watch over her without interfering with her grief.

Ann went very deep into herself after that, but people never knew the hell that was going on and on in her. We graduated and went to distant colleges.

I went through a lot of relationships, she went through a couple, and ten years later we were in our hometown again for a summer, both attending to family matters. She was down from being dropped after five years. I was down from running away from too many relationships, and trying to keep homo and heterosexual lovers separated. I had work, but Ann needed something to do, and I needed a reason to see her everyday. She agreed to hand-build a covered bridge for me. It was to be a present for a woman I was looking at. We went out and she sketched bridges, found old wood for the weathered look, and carved each piece by hand. When the bridge and the summer were about finished, we drove up to my father's hunting camp one night. She was standing by the sink and I was sitting on the bed when she held out her arms, and I walked into them. We both knew it was from being friends for 20 years.

A couple weeks later we left our hometown to pick-up our separate lives. She was not my first or last lover; but she was my first sister.

Just out of college,
I was hired as a
female executive trainee.

Following the company custom,
I invited my boss for dinner.

I did all the right things
from soup to mints.

When it came time for her to leave,
I fetched her coat like a gracious
hostess would, and helped her on with it,
and kissed the back of her neck.

circling in the warm wet

widenings of you

within me within you

my fingers

slip between the sprawling

where i am

stretching to reach

untouching with each touching

touch the wet

of tears

of you

inside and outside

the soft drippings

entangle in the urgency

of now

A poem for T. (first poem ever kept)

Someday
I want to empty myself of my love for you,
Once and for all.
I want to get it all out.
If I could,
I would love you
And comfort you;
Be next to you
And hold you
Stroke your hair and your skin,
And let you touch me.

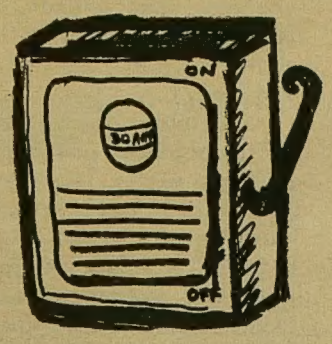
HOW NOT TO BLOW YOUR FUSE

Changing a fuse is any easy thing to do if you know three things:

1- where your fuse box is located
2- what type of fuse you need
3- what amp fuse you need

Where your fuse box is located

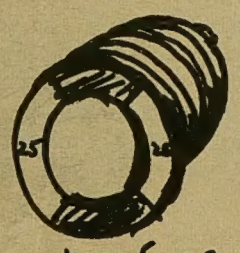
Fuse boxes are generally grey boxes on the wall in the basement, or in the stairwell, or in the kitchen. Sometimes there is more than one fuse box, so it is a good idea to see which part of the house or apartment is connected to which fuse box. You can check by turning the fuse box to the off position and see what lights or appliances go off.



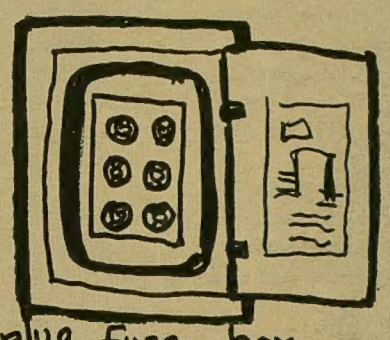
What type of fuses you need

There are two types of fuses:

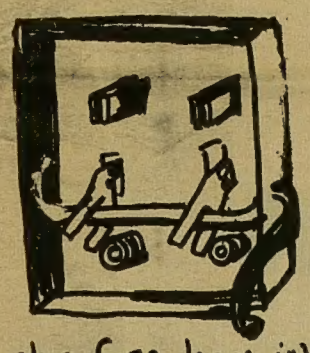
plug fuses- which have threaded bases like lamps and screw into threaded sockets. You can take them out and replace them without getting a shock because the ends are insulated, (just don't stick your fingers into the socket). You don't have to be too concerned whether the power is on or off, since you never touch any exposed metal areas.



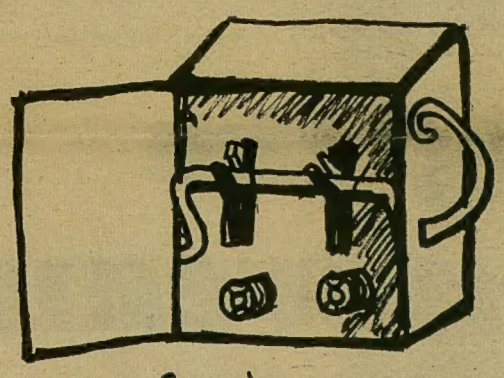
25 amp plug fuse



6 plug fuse box

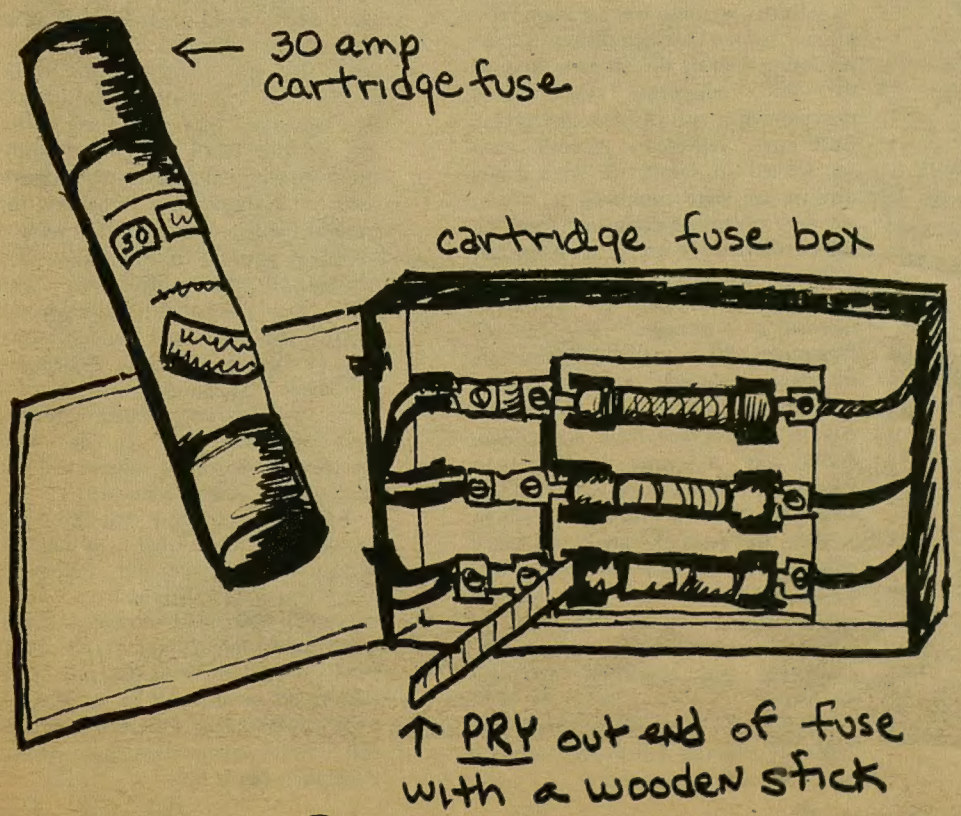


2 plug fuse box in off position



2 plug fuse box in ON position

cartridge fuses- which have a fiber body and metal end caps and fit into spring clips and since the end caps are exposed they can give you a shock. To remove a cartridge fuse first turn the power off, (its good to keep a flashlight handy) and then pry out the end with a wooden stick. Do not under any circumstances use metal. If you turn the lights back on to see if the new fuse has worked, make sure you turn the power off again before going back to the fuse box.



What amp fuse you need

Sometimes on the front of the fuse box it says what amp fuse you need, otherwise unscrew or pry out the fuse (using the instructions above) and see what it says. The numbers run 15, 20 25, 30 amps. Whatever the number is, that is the same number you should replace it with. A fuse consists of a piece of wire of low melting point. The electric current generates heat. The higher the current the higher the heat. The fuse melts if the current is too hot, so it is very important not to use a higher fuse than your wires can stand without being overloaded. Overloading wires can cause fire in the walls, and the proper fuse blowing is the only warning.

After you take the fuse out check to see if it has a black burned out spot on it. Some fuse boxes have up to six fuses and that is how you tell which fuse has burned out. Sometimes all the fuses burn out, sometimes only one.

Circuit breakers

In some houses there is a circuit breaker rather than a fuse box. It has a handle like a switch and looks like one. It opens when the current gets too hot. All you do is push the handle back up. If the current is still overloaded it will trip again, and you can push it up again.

Common problems

A clothes washer takes 375 watts. While running it takes between 6 and 7 amps of current. When it is in the "wash" stage it needs more current, maybe 25, 30 or 35 amps. If there is a 15 amp fuse, it will blow the circuit. You need a fuse called a "slow-blow" fuse, which is made to handle air conditioners and washing machines. Even though it is rated at 15 amps it will compensate for the extra heavy momentary load.

Here is a list of what different numbered amp fuses can maintain without overloading. Appliances are measured in watts, some appliances have watts or amp measurements on the bottom. One 15 amp fuse can hold 1610-1800 watts. One 20 amp fuse can hold 2300-2400 watts on a 2 wire circuit.

LIGHTING	watts
ceiling or wall (each bulb)	46-150
floor lamps (each)	150-300
fluorescent lights (each tube)	15-40
pin-to-wall lamps	50-150
table lamps (each)	50-150
ultra violet lamps	385

APPLIANCES	watts
baker (portable)	800-1000
bottle warmer	95
broiler-rotisserie	1326-1650
casserole	1350
clock	2
coffee percolator	440-1000
coffee grinder	150
corn popper	1350
deep fat fryer	1350
egg cooker	500
electric fan (portable)	100
electric roaster	1650
food blender	230-250
hair dryer	235
hand iron	1000
heating pad	60
iron	1650
mixer	100
portable heater	1000
radio (each)	100
record changer	75
refrigerator	150
sandwich gull	660-800
saucepan	1000
sewing machine	75
skillet	1100
television	300
toaster	up to 1150
vacuum cleaner	125
waffle iron	up to 1100

These appliances should have their OWN fuse:	watts
clothes dryer	4500
range/oven	8000-16,000
water heater	2000-4000
room air conditioner (½ to 3/4 ton)	1200-1600
water pump	700-1500

MIDDLE CLASS MYOPIA

Sometimes I think that my childhood was the place to learn the -isms: sexism, racism, nationalism, etc. Classism was the all-encompassing objective. Very early I knew what class meant and I used my interpretation to my advantage. I knew what was correct and moral. I felt sorry and much contempt for those women who wouldn't be me. And at the same time I set my sights to conquer that which was even "classier" and make it my own. It wasn't until the articles in AIAW that I began to see my conception and use of class as warped.

Now, as I try to write as a middle class woman looking at class I feel (as one woman so aptly described it) as if I "didn't have any skin." My bones stick out.

As a woman from the lower upper middle class I used the privileges given to me to isolate myself from many women. Instead of fucking I attempted to be cultured; I gained respect by being verbal; I was praised in school; my parents expected me to graduate from college, become professional, and marry some professional man after I'd gone out in the world and worked awhile. The big thing in my mother's life was that I should have a good reputation. Middle class parents can be discreet but the message is very clear: Low class women are slutty. They chase men; swing their hips and wear low-cut flashy clothing. To have class meant to be subdued. I remember being told whenever I would scratch at my face or fidget: "Only peasants touch themselves." Needless to say, friendships with certain "types" of women were not encouraged.

Things I remember are disgusting. I remember that being a Presbyterian was hot shit. Being a Baptist was not. Knowing that being "underdressed" was better than costume jewelry and turquoise chiffon dresses made me "better."

At the same time, I coveted the privileges of those women who lived in my upper class old established suburb and were the daughters of doctors and lawyers and whose mother's belonged to the Infant Welfare League. I coveted their subdued, expensive outfits. I tried to look like them. I secretly wanted to go to Smith. My parents seemed to reject that kind of material wealth (my mother cried when we bought a second TV) but that in itself seems suspect. Since we weren't the richest we were going to be the most dignfied. I guess.So, I studied Seventeen and bought the right things to wear and dated acceptable young men and went to the University of Iowa. But my striving for a higher class meant I was aiming at higher stakes from a position that was privileged as hell in the first place.

It is hard not to feel guilty, even though I realize that that is real egotistical. I know that while I was laying my middle class values on everyone else I wasn't doing anybody a favor. Faces visit me. What I hope to do now is to stop expending energy on myself and start listening to other forms of expression besides the one that sounds like my own. (I was really into being a liberal; a pacifist; never recognizing my privilege not to be violent.)

The experience that has helped me most to understand how I isolate other women through class is recognizing the resentment and hostility I feel as a woman and knowing that that anger is clean and justified. I think it is possible to transfer that awareness and not make assumptions about other women based on middle class values. To be honest, I do place value on certain kinds of behavior. I am no where near ridding myself of my classist attitudes and it would be presumptuous to think that I could in such a short time. Working class women may tell middle class women that they have privileges, but it is up to middle class women to recognize what those privileges are and to change their behavior and each other.

Once I found myself stripped of class decoration (intellectually, anyway. The gut reacts in strange and horrifying ways.) I wasn't sure that there was anything left. But lo and behold I am being forced to create something for myself that has origins different from those that fed the -isms.

using the women's movement

We ran an ad a couple of issues ago for the Women's National Abortion Coalition Conference (WNAC). We didn't research which women's groups were organizing the conference and just read about what happened there and feel its important to relate why the conference was unacceptable to us.

The committee for WNAC - largely staffed by Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) women, wanted the Coalition to unite around the single issue of abortion repeal and the single tactic of mass demonstration. Other women responded to the lack of real committment to all women by requiring "no forced sterilization" and "no restriction on contraception". Some lesbian sisters proposed a fourth demand "freedom of sexual expression", which was met with antagonism and rejected. They walked out with many other women who believed that a true women's liberation committment to abortion stems from the conviction that a woman has the absolute right to control over her own body. By rejecting that demand WNAC demonstrated that their committment to political expediency far exceeded their committment to the women's movement. The women who walked out formed WISE-Women for the Inclusion of Sexual Expression. The following article, reprinted from RAT, relates what happened at the conference. You can get in touch with the WISE women through FOCAS(Feminist Organization for Communication, Action, Service) % Pat Korbets, P.O. Box 558 Cathedral Station, New York, New York 10015. They are acting to coordinate efforts to structure a true national women's liberation coalition.

The workshops at the Women's National Abortion Coalition conference began Saturday morning. Many SWP/YSA members were in evidence. The chairwomen of the workshops were apparently appointed by the staff rather than chosen by the women in the workshops. The basic similarity among all of the workshops seemed to be the insistence that this conference was a one-issue conference. This seems contradictory since there were three established demands and one other (the fourth demand) the inclusion of which was to be voted upon. Many of the workshops seemed to be lectures rather than group-participation workshops. The afternoon workshops were much the same.

Saturday evening was set aside for a plenary session at which there was to be no voting. During this session, those of us who supported the fourth demand--which was labelled "the lesbian issue"--were repeatedly ignored when we wished to speak, we were called divisive, we were compared to Nixon, we were called the delegation from the sub-committee on un-Amerikan activities, and were booed and hissed at. We were witnesses to incredible railroading through of various suggestions. When the WISE group left the plenary to caucus, a vote was taken to alter slightly the agenda for the next day so that women from out-of-town could stay to vote. It had been specifically stated that no vote would be taken. We returned with a statement to read to the assembly which was taken directly from a YSA publication that obviously showed the YSA plan to move in and literally take over the women's movement by supplying the leadership and education that was needed.

While this was being read the assembly shouted and booed and tried to take over the microphone. Eventually, the microphone was disconnected. When we continued to read, nearly the whole assembly began to chant "Sit down, sit down," so we sat down in the front of the auditorium. Finally, the statement was read and met with cheers of "Right on" and other phrases in support of the YSA position from the assembly. We left the auditorium in rather advanced stages of frustration and caucussed again. We decided to meet the next morning to decide about using establishment press to try to explain what was happening.

Sunday at the final plenary I came to a point past which I cannot clearly state the facts of what happened. I saw women looking at us to see how we were voting and then voting against us. I saw women vote down the proposal for free abortion on demand which clearly means that poor women are still in the position of not being able to get abortions when they need them. After this, we (the WISE women) left again after formally withdrawing our support. After we had gone out to caucus, the assembly voted that no WISE women would be allowed to vote unless they relinquished their affiliations with WISE. They also voted that they would identify themselves and the conference as part of the Women's Liberation Movement. On Sunday afternoon. several well-known women withdrew their support also. During their speeches, they were harassed and the microphones were disconnected.

I am angry, so angry that all I feel I can do is not forget what I saw and felt. Women came to me with statements like, "You're a lesbian: let me ask you a question." That kind of objectification is somehow more painful when it comes from women. I have to stop now. I am feeling sort of strangled by my feelings. I have to trust that what I have written will in some way make an impression on those that read it.

Just recently I decided that I wouldn't have any more male lovers. This came about after I made the decision to become a part of the woman's movement. I was used to 'understand' the other person's position so I wouldn't threaten or even challenge it. 'Understanding' was a way of adapting myself to an easy way out. Funny, it wasn't so easy. I was in fact accepting my position. When I got fucked over I hardly ever fought back. I would be angry and hurt but most of the time I cried and screamed out of range from the other person's ears. I was afraid. I rationalized I didn't want to hurt anyone even if they had hurt me. I found it really hard to stand up to anyone. Not because you aren't worth it, I said to myself, but because you understand, you can take it, and maybe they can't. After all they fucked you over because they were insecure. . . .

What shit! Hitler was insecure so he had to kill millions to make up for it? What the fuck was I doing? Not only to myself but to the millions of other women getting fucked over and accepting their position?

I can no longer accept that position. We must live for ourselves for once. There is no sense in denying ourselves that part of ourselves which will stand up and fight that part which will change the world. Understand but understand something different for a change. Understand that without fighting or confronting for ourselves we can never change anything.

It's still hard for me because I'm still unsure of myself. I still find it hard to be exposed. I'm still afraid. Slowly I'm holding my own ground. But there's one thing for sure - I'm coming out!

not knowing freedom
i mimic myself
until the integrity
of womanhood ascends ...

The freedom in choosing myself caused anguish because it involved a realization that my actions were not finite. They could be changed. New life styles can be implimented when old, established patterns of behavior are ineffective. Deception and evasion was easier to accept than the truth which led to myself.

Trying to change society is perhaps necessary, but not sufficient for liberation. I needed to free myself by developing a consciousness. Whatever validity I have as a human individual, as a woman, comes from my own consciousness. I know that each one of us has the potential to transcend our present mode of being. However, potential exists only when we realize the possibility of that potential. We limit ourselves with distorted vision and destructive action, when we fear our own thoughts and emotions. We create our essence, when we allow each day to assert itself from within us. Peace lies in understanding and accepting that all is within us.

-2-

suspended in the embracing
of you
fading softly
into diminishing years
so tender
a tear falls
and i tremble
with love
and concern
as you fade
with each touching
i touch
the gentle traces
of you

"... leaves fall around a tree in autumn, a tree unaware of the rain running down its sides, of the sun or the frost, and of life gradually retreating inward. The tree does not die. It waits."

When I first read those lines, I thought that the idea was beautiful. It does not die; it waits. My experiences with the universe were also passive. I was afraid of being spontaneous. I was afraid of honesty. But most of all, I was afraid to be myself. I feared the freedom that a consciousness provides.

being born in the world
a child
taught to betray
the woman within
i die
as i live
intricately
ingrained
with submission
to the leprous oppressor ...

My apparent stability was contained within a bureaucratized society that was impersonal and anti-women. Men offered me indifference and called it love. I felt oppressed, stifled and insignificant.

being born of flesh
a woman
thinking
nothing
for so long
only a shadow
of his reflection
on edges ...

I wandered within the dimensions of myself trying to justify my existence. Existing in a positioned, stagnant life style was less complicated than choosing to develop a unified totality - I, Me.

My feelings for you aren't so different
Than good feelings for the woman I'm with.
So what should I do with how much I love you?
I ask because of the woman you care for and the woman I live with.
I'm afraid of wanting to hold you:
1) You say you're not straight but you haven't come out.
2) You might think that's where our relationship's at.
Yes, I know we both know better;
Is that why it's easy to keep touching a game? Because we know better?
Being together through changes and partings we've learned about each other.
When we're together I think we understand a lot of things without saying them.
My caring to be close to you is real. My caring about you is real.
But I'm afraid to tell you seriously because of what you might say.
You're a cool woman, and by intimation I've known not to be up front with you about how my feelings are toward you.
I can talk to you about everything from revolution to a sexual experience
But now I have more I want to say, and I can't.
Will you laugh? Will you freak out? Will you not care?
"it's no big deal," you could say,
"You've loved others, and I really care about ..."
Well, I love you and that's not invalidated
or lessened in intensity because of others I love. Or others you love!
But you may be right, it's no big deal.
We can't handle it!
You're afraid to confront her = I'm afraid to confront you.
We're both afraid of the Unsatisfactory Response we might get.

I know you know I'm writing this to you.
And I'm sorry, but I have no other free form of expression that I haven't tried.
Affection doesn't need to be reciprocated.
Caring doesn't need to be talked about, does it?
But I WANT TO TELL YOU. I want your response.
I don't want to be alone in feeling what I'm feeling.
I want you to know. I want to know.
I'm being too demanding.
Curiosity killed the cat. Demands make people run.

some thoughts on lesbian literature

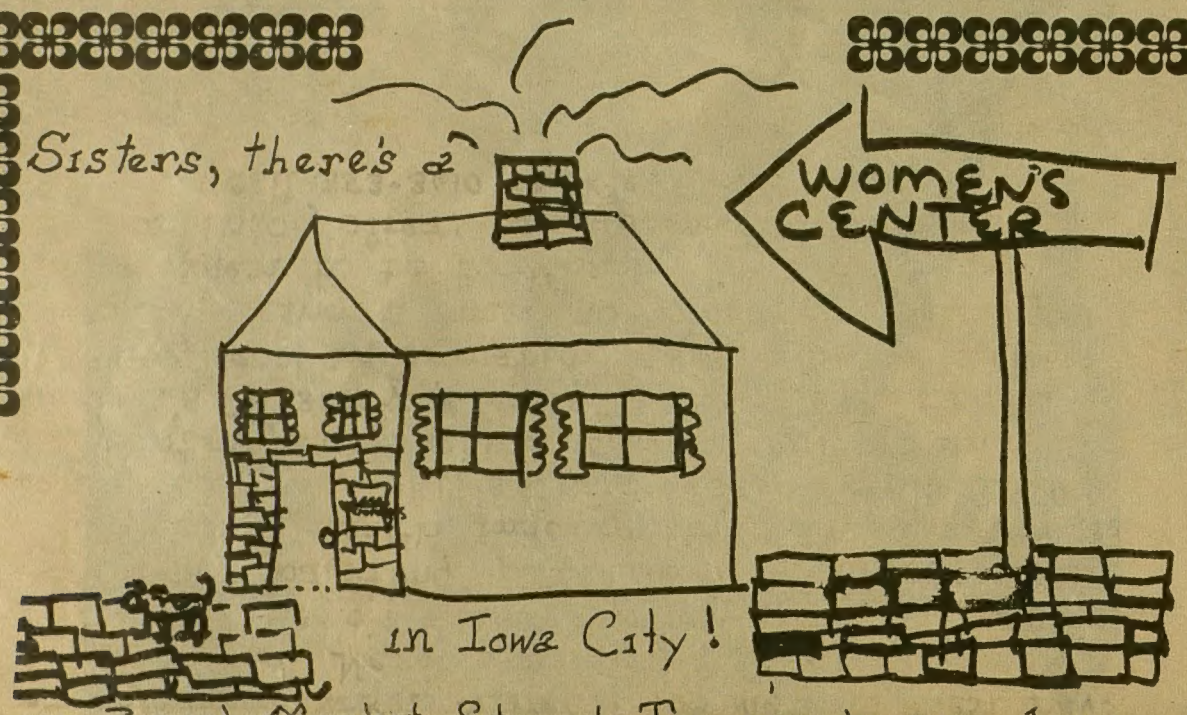
Until this year I had never read any lesbian literature - books or stories written by women about lesbian experience - except the poems of Sappho, which I treasured, memorized, and made a little hand-lettered book of for the woman I loved. I had read some books by male authors that touched on gay experience, and although they weren't very satisfying, they intrigued me because I knew of nowhere else to find fictionalized accounts of the feelings I had. So I read what I could - from D. H. Lawrence's The Rainbow and The Fox to The Story of O by Pauline Réage (who may not be a woman but probably is). But these were slight help and, as I said, unsatisfying because they never rang true to me. Of course - they were written by men or served heterosexual needs.

The first contemporary lesbian poetry and true accounts of gay women's experience I ever read were in AIAW's first issues. It was a shock to read such honest and beautiful statements of the kinds of feelings I'd had for years but always kept hidden. Even though many of the experiences recounted were different from mine, I was compelled by them because they amplified so greatly my own self-understanding.

Finally I became acquainted with people in the women's community, and heard about novels that really dealt with lesbian experience. The 1st gay novel I ever read was A Place for Us, which is delightful. It is a historical novel based on the true lives of two pioneer women who fell in love and struck out on their own to settle and farm in upstate New York. In a sane society the book would be a standard for junior high libraries (where teen romance books are at their most cloying and depressingly male-identified.)

The next books I read were The Price of Salt and The Well of Loneliness. They're out of two different eras and are both pretty bad, although the Well is redeemed I suppose by being the "classic lesbian novel" (1928). The Price of Salt is a melodrama about societal persecution of two women as a result of a child custody fight between the older woman and her former husband. (The one redeeming aspect of the novel is that the two heroines finally make love, after half the book is over, in Waterloo, Iowa.) The depressing aspect of the books is their sociological message: lesbians have a rough life, but they're people. We've all been through some variation on that movie before, so there's little to learn on a personal level. But a lesbian has so few positive models to relate to that she takes what she can find to enjoy in literature.

But since I read Violette LeDuc's autobiographical novel La Bâtarde (in English by Dell) I really am excited about the possible vitality in a novel of lesbian experience. The best way I can explain the difference between her book and the others I read is to say that her lesbianism and the validity of her whole psychic nature is a basic assumption in her story. As a result the book is deeply personal.



on 3 east Market Street. Too new to even have a phone yet. Needs painting & furnishing now - will need people & ideas after that. (Needs people for painting part too.) Hope to have a Women's Health Information Ctr., classes in basic survival skills (self-defense, plumbing, carpentry, auto-mechanics) as well as in women's history & socialization, a liberation library, legal information, abortion referrals, besides being a meeting place or just a place for women to be together.

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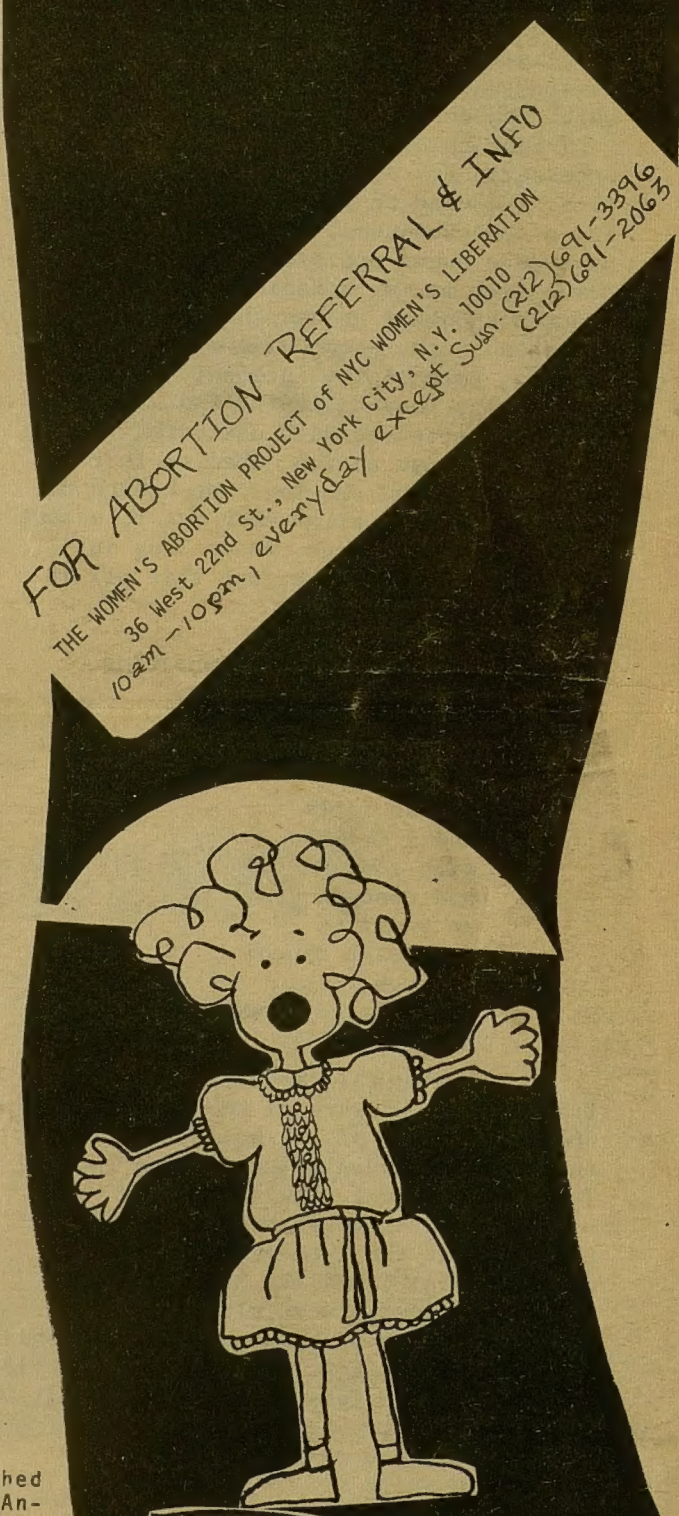
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SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And ain't I a women? I could work, as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well... And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

Ain't I A Woman is published every three weeks by the Angry Independent Amazon Women P.O. Box 1169, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

We are a collective of 150 women functioning as a world wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians.

If your group wants to receive bundles of AIN'T I A WOMAN?, you can send 15¢ per copy (minimum bundle: 20 copies) in advance.

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